

News From _____

U.S. Senator
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BYRD ANNOUNCES FUNDING EFFORTS FOR MINE SAFETY, RESEARCH AND ENFORCEMENT

*New Inspectors, Coal Dust Controls, and Black Lung Clinics
among federal programs receiving funding*

Washington, DC – Senator Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., continued his spirited advocacy on behalf of mine safety and the health of coal miners by securing millions of dollars in federal funding for the hiring of new inspectors, increased underground to surface communications systems, implementing new coal dust controls, and for black lung clinics across the nation.

“I look forward to these monies being put to good use,” said Byrd. “I am hopeful that the new Administration will unleash the talents and the skills of the dedicated personnel at the Mine Safety and Health Administration. Every one of the Federal employees who works to protect the health and safety of our coal miners is to be commended.”

Due to the work of Senator Byrd and his lifelong commitment to the safety of our nation’s miners, Byrd, who is the senior member of the Senate Appropriations committee, was instrumental in obtaining the following federal funds, resulting in a significant increase in programs for mine safety, health and research programs:

- The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), was funded at a level of \$347 million, which is \$15 million above the FY 2008 enacted level and \$15 million above the President Bush’s budget request. The additional funding will cover hiring inspectors, specialists, and support staff; implementation of the MINER Act; 100-percent compliance with statutory mandates; salaries and bonuses to recruit and retain personnel; enforcement of employer-provided safety training, and mine rescue contests;
- The mine safety office in the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health was funded at \$50 million, which was \$12.9 million above President Bush’s budget request. This funding will accelerate research related to disaster prevention, dust control and monitoring, roof control, technology transfer, and training programs, and to ensure applied engineering applications;
- \$7.2 million for Black Lung Clinics. This funding level is \$1.2 million over the President Bush’s FY 2009 budget request of \$6 million for black lung clinics;

- \$2 million above the President's budget request for Mine Safety and Health Administration to enforce coal dust rules through increased spot inspections;
- \$1.808 million for the United Mine Workers of America Career Centers in Beckley, West Virginia, and Washington, Pennsylvania, for mine rescue team training;
- \$1 million above the President's request of \$10 million for the Mine Safety and Health Administration Approval and Certification Center in Triadelphia in order to provide for the purchasing of new equipment, and infrastructure improvements; and
- \$2 million above the President's request of \$11.5 million for the Mine Health and Safety Academy in Beckley in order to provide for online training programs, and infrastructure improvements.

"As the foster son of an impoverished coal miner, I have always looked out for the miners in the field," said Byrd. "We must do all that we can to ensure that these miners have the tools and safety mechanisms in place to return home to their loved ones each and every night."

"Through my efforts, we have made progress in hiring additional enforcement personnel and providing needed resources to MSHA to implement the mandates in the MINER Act. And we continue to provide resources to address the health concerns from black lung disease and provide research funding to increase mine safety. These efforts are not only necessary they are a moral responsibility as long as I represent the people of the Mountain State."